



A HALF HOUR WITH
ROBERT ELSMERE.



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A Half-Hour with Robert Elsmere.

A half-hour with Robert Elsmere—not the man of that name ; for, like other heroes of romance, the man is but the creature of the author's imagination ; but Robert Elsmere the book.

Robert Elsmere the book is, and is intended to be, something more than a mere novel in the ordinary acceptation of that term. By the London Times "it is placed in the category of *clever attacks upon revealed religion*. It certainly offers us a substitute for revealed religion ; and possibly the thought of the book might be indicated in the words ; the christianity accepted in England is a good thing ; but come with me, and I will show you a better." Gladstone says of it—"Never was a book written with greater persistency and intensity of purpose. Every page of the principal narrative is adapted and addressed by Mrs. Ward to the final aim which is bone of her bone, and flesh of her flesh. This aim is to expel the preternatural element from christianity, to destroy its dogmatic structure, yet to keep intact the moral and spiritual results." Such being the case, reader, you will not be surprised that I, a clergyman, should invite you to an examination of this book, novel though it be ; nor will you feel that in so doing I am stepping out of my appropriate sphere.

ROBERT ELSMERE'S CREED.

The two leading peculiarities in the creed of Robert Elsmere the man, and commended to our acceptance in the book are—(1) A denial of the divinity of Christ, and (2) The rejection of the Christian miracle, in all its forms.

The author writes—describing Elmere's first distinct conception of his new faith—"In the stillness of the night there rose up weirdly before "him a whole new mental picture—effacing, pushing out, in-

"numerable olden images of thought. It was the image of a purely human Christ—a purely human, explicable, yet always wonderful Christianity.—He gazed upon, it fascinated by the strange beauty and order of the emerging spectacle." p. 354*.

Subsequently he is represented as "going through a catechism with himself," in the words—"Do I believe in God? Surely, surely! 'Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him!' Do I believe in Christ? Yes—in the teacher, the martyr, the symbol to us Westerns of all things heavenly and abiding, the image and pledge of the invisible life of the spirit—with all my soul and all my mind."

"But in the man-God, the Word from Eternity—in a wondering Christ, in a risen and ascended Jesus, in the living Intercessor and Mediator for the lives of His doomed brethren.' He waited, conscious that it was the crisis of his history, and there rose in him, as though articulated one by one by an audible voice, words of irrevocable meaning. Every human soul in which the voice of God makes itself felt, enjoys, equally with Jesus of Nazareth, the divine worship, and *miracles do not happen*.'" p. 374.

What he means by the expression "*miracles do not happen*"—an expression several times repeated in the book—is made evident by such declarations as—"We are now able to show how miracle, or the belief in it, which is the same thing, comes into being. The study of miracle in all nations, and under all conditions, yields everywhere the same results. Miracle may be the child of imagination, of love, nay, of a passionate sincerity, but invariably it lives with ignorance and is withered by knowledge." p. 536, and "The contention of persons in my position is: That to the man who has had the special training required, and in whom this training has not been neutralized by any overwhelming bias, it can be as clearly demonstrated that the miraculous Christian story rests on a tissue of mistakes, as it can be demonstrated that the Isidorian Decretals were a forgery, or the correspondence of Paul and Seneca a pious

*The quotations are from the Seaside Library edition of the book.

"fraud, or that the mediæval belief in witchcraft was the product of "physical ignorance and superstition." p. 445.

Such is the creed, in its two most important particulars, which must give it form in all its parts, commended to our acceptance in Robert Elsmere, the book.

NOT THE CHRISTIAN FAITH.

That this creed is irreconcilably at variance with the long established faith of Christendom as expressed in the Articles of the Church of England, and the confessions of all the Reformed Churches as well, the author frankly admits :—perhaps I ought rather to say, emphatically declares, in the course of conduct her hero is made to pursue when once he has distinctly adopted it. He is a regularly ordained minister of the Church of England, pleasantly settled as Rector of the parish of Murewell in Surrey, and busily and most successfully engaged in preaching and laboring among the people of his charge. When he has distinctly adopted his new faith, Elsmere himself says : "If I remain an honest man, I must give up my living, and I must cease to be a minister of the Church of England." p. 399. And he carries out this decision, notwithstanding the remonstrance of certain friends. He promptly resigns his living, renounces his ministry in the Church of England ; and feeling himself unable to work in connection with any other of the historical churches of Christendom, he spends his remaining days in laboring to establish "*The New Brotherhood of Christ*" among the working people of East London.

HOW ELSMERE'S CHANGE OF FAITH WAS BROUGHT ABOUT.

How was this change in Elsmere's faith brought about? By what arguments was he led to abandon his old faith and adopt the new? If, as Mrs. Ward intimates more than once, "Christianity has broad grounds and deep roots in emotion, but in reason none whatever," we have a right to expect that in telling us of Elsmere's change of faith she will give us a clear and definite statement of the reasons for that change, at least, in so far as his new faith is concerned. Yet, just here, she fails us utterly.

The story as she tells it is, in substance, this: After Elsmere's settlement at Murewell he conceives the idea of writing a book on "the rise of modern society in Gaul;" and, as "all history depends upon testimony," he is led to study the question—"What is the nature and "value of testimony at given times? In other words, did the men of "the third century understand, or report, or interpret facts in the "same way as the men of the sixteenth or nineteenth?" p. 221. He has free access to the large library of a certain Squire Wendover—a scholarly man, but a pronounced atheist—and for nearly a year, occupies all his leisure time in reading books bearing upon the question in hand, obtained from that library; and during the latter part of the time, in discussions with the Squire himself. Of the arguments used by the Squire, or presented in the books Elsmere read, the author tells us nothing. She does not even give us the names of the books. Instead thereof, she simply chronicles the change, and gives a statement of the conclusions reached.

From the nature of these conclusions, with the help of a hint dropped here and there, we infer that the books read were the writings of Renan (mentioned as an old personal friend of Squire Wendover,) Robertson Smith, Darwin, Spencer, Huxley, and others of that school. The only further intimation of the way in which Elsmere's change of faith was wrought, is that contained in the words—"Perhaps it was his scientific works,"—among other efforts for the good of the laboring men and boys of his parish, he had established a "Naturalist's Club," in which he took a deep interest—"fragmentary as it was, that was really quickening and sharpening these historical impressions of his. Evolution, once a mere germ in the "mind, was beginning to press, to encroach, to intermeddle with the "mind's other furniture. And the comparative instinct—that tool, "*par excellence*, of modern science—was at last fully awake, was "growing fast, taking hold, now here, now there." p. 304.

Of the terrible havoc which the theory of evolution, when fully adopted, may make of a man's faith, Charles Darwin furnishes us a

sad example, when he writes, in a letter to his friend W. Graham—
 “ You have expressed my inward conviction, though far more vividly
 “ and clearly than I could have done, that the Universe is not the re-
 “ sult of chance ; but then, with me, the horrid doubt always arises,
 “ whether the convictions of a man’s mind, which has been developed
 “ from the mind of the lower animals, are of any value, or at all trust-
 “ worthy. Would any one trust in the convictions of a monkey’s
 “ mind, if there are any convictions in such a mind?” *Darwin’s Life
 and Letters, Vol. I, p. 285.* Strange, that evolution which has wrought
 out such mighty changes in nature as its advocates contend for, trans-
 forming a surging mass of star-dust into our Cosmos, *i. e.* our Uni-
 verse in all its beautiful arrangement and order, should not yet have
 wiped out all traces of its monkey ancestry from the brain of a nine-
 teenth century philosopher, such as Charles Darwin ;—Stranger still,
 that the monkey taint should be of such a character that man can be
 trusted in such a complex inference as that of the law of evolution,
 from the ten thousand facts on which that law rests, and yet “ a horrid
 doubt ” should hang over its far simpler inference of a designer, from
 the evidence of design, which meets us everywhere in nature—of a
 creator from the wondrous works of his hands ;—Strangest of all,
 that this monkey-tainted brain can be implicitly trusted, in determin-
 ing the existence, and something of the history of paleolithic man,
 from a study of the chipped arrow heads, and split marrow-bones,
 found in certain caves and gravel strata, and yet can teach us nothing
 with certainty, of the existence of a creator, from the study of such a
 class of plants as the orchids, in their structure exhibiting the many
 striking adaptations of means to ends, which Darwin has pointed out
 in his excellent monograph on orchids. Does it not seem, that in a
 case like that of Darwin, cited above, evolution has made havoc, not
 with a man’s faith alone, but with his common sense as well ?

With these facts before us, turn we now to an examination of some
 of the conclusions at which Elsmere arrived, as the result of his
 reading.

"EITHER GOD OR AN IMPOSTER."

"*'Either God or an imposter.'* What scorn the heart, the intellect, threw on the alternative! Not in the dress of speculations which represent the product of long passed, long superseded looms of human thought, but in the guise of common manhood, laden like his fellows with the pathetic weight of human weakness and human ignorance, the Master moves toward him." p. 393. In this summary way does Elsmere dispose of an argument with which our ablest christian writers have upheld the divinity of Christ, an argument based upon the claims he made, and the life he lived as recorded in the gospels.

In reply, I would ask the reader's attention to the fact, that the divinity of Christ is not something taught us in a detached passage here and there, but is the great informing truth which determines the course of his life, and the character of his teachings, as they are set forth in the gospels. His story, as there told, begins with the words—"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made. And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us." Jno. 1: 1, 3, 14. At an early stage of his ministry he publicly exercised the inalienable prerogative of God in saying to a poor paralytic, "Son, thy sins be forgiven thee;" and this in the face of the objections of the scribes, "Why doth this man thus speak blasphemies? Who can forgive sin but God only," Mark 2: 5, 7. And the closing act of his life was, to open the gates of Paradise to a dying, but penitent thief, hanging by his side. Luke 23: 43. When to his question, "Whom say ye that I am?" Peter replied "thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God, Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jonas, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." Matt. 16: 16, 17. When brought before the Jewish sanhedrim, "the high-priest said unto him, I adjure thee by the living God that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God, Jesus said unto

him, Thou has said ; nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven." Matt. 26 : 63, 64, and they adjudged him to death for the blasphemy, as they considered it, of this answer. Even in his death his divinity was made evident in so many ways that the Roman centurion who presided at his crucifixion, exclaimed, " Truly, this was the Son of God." Matt. 27 : 54. And long afterwards the infidel Rousseau, on reading the story of his crucifixion, was constrained to confess—" Socrates died like a philosopher, but Jesus Christ like a God." In all, these and in many other ways, did he distinctly and persistently claim for himself divinity. How he could do this, if he were " a purely human Christ "; possessed of nothing more than " common manhood, laden like his fellows with the pathetic weight of human weakness and human ignorance ;" and yet escape the righteous charge of imposture, is, I confess, beyond my comprehension ; and to attempt to dismiss the alternative, " either God or an Impostor " with the declaration " the intellect throws scorn upon it," is but a disingenuous attempt to get rid of an argument which cannot be answered. Even Mrs. Ward herself seems to have felt the force of this argument when, in a subsequent portion of the book, she puts into the mouth of Mrs. Elsmere the words—" Your historic Christ, " Robert, will never win souls. If he was God, every word you speak will insult him. If he was man, he was not a good man." p. 520.

" CHRISTIAN MYTHOLOGY."

When Elsmere is considering the question of " taking orders " he has a conversation with his friend and tutor Langham, a confirmed sceptic. Langham says—" Well, after all, the difficulty lies in preaching anything. One may as well preach *a respectable mythology* " as anything else."

" What do you mean by mythology ?" cried Robert, hotly.

" Simply ideas, or experience personified," said Langham. " I take it they are the subject-matter of all theologies."

" I don't understand you," said Robert, flushing. " To the Chris-

"tian, facts have been the medium by which ideas the world
 "could not otherwise have come at have been communicated to man.
 "Christian theology is a system of ideas indeed, but of ideas realized,
 "made manifest in facts."

"How do you know they are facts?" he said, dryly.

"The younger man took up the challenge with all his natural
 "eagerness, and the conversation resolved itself into a discussion of
 "Christian evidences. Or rather, Robert held forth, and Langham
 "kept him going by an occasional remark which acted like the prick
 "of a spear. The tutor's psychological curiosity was soon satisfied.
 "He declared to himself that the intellect had precious little to do
 "with Elsmere's Christianity. He had got hold of all the stock
 "apologetic arguments, and used them, his companion admitted,
 "with ability and ingenuity. But they were merely the outworks of
 "the citadel. The inmost fortress was held by something wholly dis-
 "tinct from intellectual conviction—by moral passions, by love, by
 "feeling, by that mysticism, in short, which no healthy youth should
 "be without." p. 77.

This conclusion of Langham, that the story of Christ given us in
 the gospels, was but "*a respectable mythology*," though rejected at
 the time, was afterwards accepted, and taught by Elsmere.

To say nothing of the objections to this conclusion, founded upon
 the style of thought and expression which characterize the gospels,
 a remarkably plain and simple record of facts and teachings that they
 are, the hypothesis which assigns them a mythological character is in
 violation of a law of human thought. Mythology has always been
 written out long after the mythological person has died. The Greek
 and Latin poets, for example, in giving us the story of Jupiter, tell
 us that they wrote of that which occurred ages before they were
 born. In contrast with this, the Evangelists in writing the life of
 Christ expressly claim that they are telling us that "which they have
 heard, which "they have seen with their eyes, which they have looked
 upon and their hands have handled, of the Word of life." I John 1:1.
 —that they have not followed cunningly devised fables when they

made known the power and coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, but were eye-witnesses of his majesty." II Pet. 1:16,—in short, they claim to write as the contemporaries of Christ, and to record, that which they themselves have seen and heard ; and there is abundant proof, historical and critical, that this, their claim, is well founded. There is a range of mountains in Virginia which has received the name of the " Blue Ridge," because of their soft blue color, when seen from a distance. This, their color, does not belong to the mountains themselves. Seen near at hand they are rocky and forest-covered, grey and green, like all other mountains. It is the hazy mass of atmosphere interposed between them and the eye of the observer, when seen from a distance, that gives them the soft blue tint from which they have taken their name. So is it with mythological story. Without the distance in time interposed between the hero and historian, giving opportunity for oral tradition to do its characteristic work, the hero would be stripped of his marvellousness and his charm.

" AN EXQUISITE FAIRY TALE."

" His friend's confidence, only made Langham as melancholy as Job. What was it based on? In the first place, on Christianity—" on the passionate acceptance of *an exquisite fairy tale*, said the " dreaming spectator to himself, which at the first honest challenge " of the critical sense withers in our grasp. That, Elsmere has never " given it, and in all probability never will. No ! A man sees none " the straighter for having a wife he adores, a profession that suits " him, between him and unpleasant facts." p. 202.

" *Fairy tale !* Could any reasonable man watch a life like Catharine's and believe that nothing but a delusion lay at the heart of it? " And as he asked the question, he seemed to hear Mr. Gray's " answer : ' All religious are true and all are false. In them all, more " or less visibly, man grasps at the one thing needful—self-forsaken, " God laid hold of. The spirit in them all is the same, answers " eternally to reality ; it is but the letter, the fashion, the imagery, " that are relative and changing." p. 293.

This idea of the gospel story of the life of Christ as but "an exquisite fairy tale," Elsmere seems to have adopted—and he certainly did adopt it as part and parcel of his new faith—as a consequence of the theory of evolution applied to the mind of man; involving as that theory does a belief in "the gradual growth within the limits of authentic history of man's capacity for telling the exact truth." p. 547. His studies in connection with the book he was engaged in writing would naturally give his thoughts this direction. Belief in evolution led Charles Darwin to the conclusion "that men, at the commencement of our christian era were ignorant and credulous to a degree almost incomprehensible to us." (*Darwin's Life and Letters. Vol. L., p. 278.*) Is it any wonder then that Elsmere should have been led to regard them as incapable of writing anything better than Fairy tales. Fairy tales are the delight of our childhood; and I suppose all of us can recall the time when Jack the Giant Killer was believed in as implicitly as Alexander the Great, or Napoleon Bonaparte. In the "Childhood of the World," with "the capacity for telling the exact truth" but beginning to develop, it seems unreasonable to expect anything, in the way of history, better than Fairy tales.

But, if all this be true, and the brains of the Evangelists were so imperfectly developed—were yet so tainted with the monkey blood of their ancestors—that they were "incapable of telling the exact truth," even about things they saw and heard and handled, how came Matthew to write the Sermon on the Mount, that admirable summary of practical religion,—confessedly the most difficult of all subjects which have ever engaged the attention of man—a sermon which has been the admiration of thoughtful men in every age since it was written; a sermon such as this nineteenth century has produced nothing to compare with it?—Or the Prophet Micah, seven hundred years earlier, to give a definition of religion (see Micah 6:8), of which Huxley says: "If any so-called religion takes away from this great saying of Micah, I think it wantonly mutilates; while, if it adds

thereto, I think it obscures the perfect ideal of religion." (*Order of Creation*, p. 62.)—Or, eight hundred years earlier still; How came Moses to write the law of the Ten Commandments; a writing which, as has been truly said, has moulded and given character to the jurisprudence of the most highly civilized nations on the face of the earth to-day? The truth is—the Sermon on the Mount, and Micah's definition of practical religion, and the law of the Ten Commandments, in the province of human thought, like the temple of Luxor, and the head of the Sphinx, and the Great Pyramid, in the province of human art, are irreconcilable with the theory of evolution in its application to the mind of man. If we are determined to hold on to that theory we can do so consistently, only by assuming that—if facts do not agree with our theory, then, the worse for the facts.

The conclusions of Elsmere, thus far examined, are such as bear directly upon his doctrine of "a purely human Christ." Turn we now to such as bear directly upon his other doctrine of "a purely human, explicable, but always wonderful Christianity;" a doctrine eliminating all miracle, everything supernatural from the history of christianity.

In explanation of the phrase "miracles do not happen," I have already given two brief extracts, setting forth in Elsmere's own words the conclusions he had reached respecting miracles;—Take now, a third in which Mr. Graham, his chosen friend, and the only one with whom he took counsel at the time his change of faith occurred, is the speaker:—"I see, said the tutor, at last, his hands in the pockets of "his short gray coat, his brow bent and thoughtful, well, the process "in you has been the typical process of the present day. Abstract "thought has had little or nothing to say to it. It has been all a "question of literary and historical evidence. I am old-fashioned "enough—and he smiled—to stick to the *a priori* impossibility of "miracles, but then I am a philosopher! You have come to see how "miracle is manufactured, to recognize in it merely a natural inevitable outgrowth of human testimony, in its pre-scientific stages. It "has been all experimental, inductive. I imagine—he looked up—

"you did not get much help out of the orthodox apologists," pp. 386-7.

THE CHRISTIAN MIRACLE—WHAT IS IT.

In order to a fair examination of the question here presented, we must first settle the meaning of the word *miracle*, as that word is used in Scripture. Mr. Gladstone, in his review of the book under examination. p. 11, gives a good, popular definition in his words—"Miracle, potent, prodigy, are all various forms of one and the same thing, namely, an invasion of the known and common natural order, from the side of the supernatural. They rest upon one and the same basis. We may assign to miracle a body and a soul. It has for its body something accepted as being, either in itself or in its incidents, outside the known processes of ordinary nature; and for its soul, the alleged message which in one shape or another it helps to convey from the Deity to man."

The name by which the miracles of Christ and his Apostles are most frequently designated in the New Testament is *semia*, in our English version, sometimes rendered "signs," at other times "miracles." Instances of the common use of this word we have in II Cor. 12.12: "Truly the signs (*semia*) of an Apostle were wrought among you in all patience, by signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds." "*The signs of an Apostle*" were the insignia of the apostleship, those things which furnished proof of his mission from God:—"II Thes. 3:1. "The salutation of me Paul, with mine own hand, which is the token (*semion*) in every epistle, so I write, *i. e.* my sign-manual, that by which the epistle may be known to be mine:—Luke 2:12. "And this shall be a sign (*semion*) unto you: Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger;" *i. e.* by this ye shall be able to know him who is "born this day, in the city of David, a Savior, Christ the Lord." Let us bear this in mind then, that the christian miracle is always something more than a "wonderful work;" it is always a sign, a seal, a divine attestation of a message or a messenger sent from God.

"MIRACLES DO NOT HAPPEN."

"*Miracles do not happen.*" The Christian miracles are not chance events, occurring from time to time, without any sufficient reason. As remarked above, they were all wrought in attestation of a message or messenger claiming to be "sent from God." "It is conceded that sporadic, inconsequent miracles would be difficult to prove. But given a supernatural crisis, a supernatural teacher, and a supernatural doctrine, miracles are found to be in place like jewels on the state robes of a king. All the great miracles recorded in Scripture gather around two great foci in the history of redemption: the giving of the law through Moses and the life and death of the incarnate God. Miracles in such connections are inevitable, and in the highest sense congruous. Their absence would be unaccountable." (*Hodge's Lectures on Theological Themes*, p. 67.)

Elsmere, even after his change of faith, gives emphatic expression to his belief in the existence of a God. "Do I believe in God? Surely, surely! Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." If there be a God, then there must be for man, his creature, a religion. If there be but one God, then must there be but one only, true religion. And then, the occurrence of miracles will turn upon the answer we give to the question—Is man, left to himself, able to possess himself of this true religion? That man, unaided, is incapable of ascertaining that religion, and the consequent necessity of a revelation from God, Elsmere, and the class of philosophers to which he belongs, ought to be the last to call in question. Darwin, with a brain possessing nineteenth century development, had "horrid doubts" as to whether or not there is a God—cannot determine this question fundamental in all religion. Elsmere has no doubt on this point, but, rejecting not only all forms of heathenism, but all existing forms of christianity as well, he sets to work boldly to determine what this true religion is,—and utterly fails. I say, utterly fails, for (1) what he gives us in the creed of "The New Brotherhood of Christ" is, at best, but a philosophy, and not a religion in the proper

sense of that word. It does not even pretend to answer that great first question in all religions, "How shall man be just with God?" And (2) His "New Brotherhood of Christ," if it ever existed, has already gone to pieces. I know that Mrs. Ward tells us, in the closing paragraph of her book, that "The New Brotherhood still exists, and grows"; but the later testimony of a witness upon the spot, contradicts all this. The Rev. Robert Spears, a Unitarian minister, and editor in London, publishes, over his own name, the statement that "Robert Elsmere's work in the slums of London is pure fiction, while the work of Christian men and women of the Church of England and of other churches among the poor of East London is a glorious fact." He protests against Mrs. Ward's pretentious representations and sums up the whole matter thus: "The Theism that is said to have succeeded, failed; and the supernaturalism that is said to have failed, succeeded among the working people of East London." (*Philadelphia Presbyterian*, of January 12, 1889.)

If man unaided cannot work out for himself the true religion, and I think that all history testifies that such is the fact, then, if he is ever to learn it, it must be through revelation from God; and if God should make a revelation, respecting so all-important a matter as this, it is most reasonable to suppose that the revelation will come properly authenticated—in other words—miracles must happen.

THE EVANGELISTS' INCOMPETENT WITNESSES.

"*Miracles the outgrowth of human testimony in its pre-scientific stage.*" Adopting the theory of Evolution in its widest range, and applying it to man's capacity for giving reliable testimony, for telling the truth, Elsmere rejects the christian miracles on the ground that the gospel narrative was written by men not yet possessed of sufficient brain-development to be trusted, even when they wrote about things which occurred under their own eyes,—and the only proof he offers that such was their condition is that afforded by the fact that that they lived and wrote eighteen hundred years ago.

In coming to this conclusion on such grounds, Mrs. Ward—for, of course, it is Mrs. Ward's opinions that *Elsmere* gives expression to—falls into an error common among evolutionists,—the error that the human race, as an undivided whole, has been gradually developing from the beginning; whereas if evolution has been at work among men at all it must have effected them as families, and races, and nations, and not as an undivided whole. This is placed beyond all question, by the fact that tribes, and races, and nations, are living upon the earth to-day in every stage of advancement, from the savage Patagonian, whom Darwin thought but little better than a brute, to the inhabitant of Great Britain basking in the full light of the nineteenth century civilization. The Jews as a distinct people at the time the gospels were written, had been in course of development, certainly for 1500 years, *i. e.* from the days of their exodus from Egypt. The Anglo-Saxon race, to which Mrs. Ward belongs, were little better than savages seven hundred years ago. Now, if evolution is under control of law—and such is the contention of all its advocates, on what ground does Mrs. Ward assume that the Anglo-Saxon race, in seven hundred years, has become possessed of a brain development so much greater than the Jew in more than double that time, that the one is competent to sift all testimony and detect all truth, whilst the other was left so completely in its childhood that it could produce nothing better than fairy tales? Will not fair application of the law of evolution require us to reverse Mrs. Ward's judgment, and discredit the capacity for telling the truth of the Anglo-Saxon, and to believe in that of the Jew?

The gospels are not the only history written by Jewish writers during the life of the Jewish nation. The Old Testament contains a great deal of history; their own history and that of other nations also:—And, the researches now making in Egypt and the Tigro-Euphrates valley, are furnishing us with very many striking proofs of the accuracy of these Jewish historians. Prominent among them was Ezra, the Scribe, who finished up the history contained in the Old Testament Scriptures, and set in order the work of earlier historians. Now, the most

"advanced" of the Higher Critics does not venture to assign to Ezra's work a date later than the fifth century before Christ. It is a matter beyond all question then, that the Jewish brain was sufficiently developed to tell the truth about what they heard and saw, to write creditable history five hundred years before the gospels were written.

READING IN A NATURAL SENSE.

When Elsmere is stating and explaining his new faith to Catherine, his wife, he says: "I believe you think of me as having thrown it all away. Would it not comfort you, sometimes, if you knew that although much of the Gospels, this very raising of Lazarus, for instance, seem to me no longer true in the historical sense, still they are always full to me of an ideal, a poetic truth? Lazarus may not have died and come to life, may never have existed, but still to me, now, as always, love to Jesus of Nazareth is 'resurrection' and 'life.' p. 439.

The idea of the character of the history contained in the Scriptures here expressed as it applies to its record of miracles, is well set forth by Canon Fremantle, of Oxford, in an article published in the "Popular Science Monthly" for June, 1887. In that article he writes—"The theologian of the future will probably be little concerned with miracles. We have all learned to read in a natural sense the account of the crossing of the Red Sea, which even Mr. M. Arnold, some years ago, took as meant to record a violation of physical order. The strong east wind; the cloud which beat in the faces of the Egyptians, but by its lightnings showed the Israelites their way; the waters kept back at low tide walling in the course of the fugitives, but returning upon their pursuers when the tide rose and the eye of God looked forth upon them through the cloud in the morning, lose nothing in majesty and in providential importance when we read them without imputing violations of nature."

As to the miracle of "the raising of Lazarus," no further answer is needed than that which Mrs. Ward puts into the mouth of Catherine, Elsmere's wife—"If the Gospels are not true in fact, as history, as reality. I cannot see how they are true at all, or of any value." p. 439.

Turning to the record of the miraculous passage of Israel through the Red Sea, the miracle which Canon Fremantle selects, I would ask the reader to notice that in addition to the particulars which the Canon mentions, Moses tells us that the cloud which played so important a part in the transaction appeared first at Succoth, that it guided Israel's journey from Succoth to the Sea, that it remained stationary between the Israelites and the Egyptians all the night of the passage, and then continued with Israel as their guide all through their forty years sojourn in the wilderness. In view of all the facts in the case, I submit the question—Is not a thunder cloud which lasts for forty years, which maintains a stationary position all night, in the face of an east wind strong enough to heap up the waters of the Red Sea like a wall, and which sends out all its lightning on the one side and its driving rain on the other, as completely out of the ordinary course of nature as the cloud of which Moses tells us in his narrative, as ordinarily understood?

SUMMARY OF ELSMERE'S NEW FAITH.

A summary of Elsmere's new faith, on its positive side, and in its practical application, he gives us in the closing portion of the public address before a working-man's club, in which he first announced it: "And now, my friends, what of all this? If these things I have been saying to you are true, what is the upshot of them for you and me? Simply this, as I conceive it—that instead of wasting your time and degrading your souls, by indulging in such grime as this—and he pointed to the newspapers (papers in which christianity was made the subject of ribald jest)—it is your urgent business, and mine—at this moment—to do our very *utmost* to bring this life of Jesus, our precious invaluable possession as a people, back into some real and cogent relation with our modern lives and beliefs and hopes. Do not answer me that such an effort is a mere dream and futility, conceived in the vague, apart from reality—that men must have something to worship, and that if they cannot worship Jesus they will not trouble to love Him. Is the world desolate with God still in it, and does it rest merely with us to love or not to love? Love and revere *something* we must, if we are to be men and not beasts. At all times and in all nations, as I have tried to show you, man has

"helped himself by the constant and passionate memory of those
 "great ones of his race who have spoken to him most audibly of God
 "and of eternal hope. And for us Europeans and Englishmen, as I
 "have tried to show you, history and inheritance have decided. If
 "we turn away from the true Jesus of Nazareth because he has been
 "disfigured and misrepresented by the churches, we turn away from
 "that in which our weak wills and desponding souls are meant to
 "find their most obvious and natural help and inspiration—from that
 "symbol of the Divine, which of necessity means most to *us*. No!
 "give Him back your hearts—be ashamed that you have ever for-
 "gotten your debt to Him! Let combination and brotherhood do
 "for the newer and simpler faith what they did once for the old—let
 "them give it a practical shape, a practical grip on human life. Then
 "we too shall have our Easter!—we too shall have the right to say,
 "*He is not here, He is risen*. Not here—in legend, in miracle, in
 "the beautiful outworn forms and crystallizations of older thought.
 "*He is risen*—in a wiser reverence and a more reasonable love;
 "risen in new forms of social help inspired by his memory, called
 "afresh by his name!—*Risen*—if you and your children will it—in a
 "church or company of the faithful, over the gates of which two say-
 "ings of man's past, into which man's present has breathed new
 "meaning, shall be written:

"In Thee, O Eternal, have I put my trust:

"and—'This do in remembrance of Me.'" pp. 540-1.

When I read this, it called to memory a story of a sensible, pious
 "colored brother," who had listened to an impassioned address in
 which the speaker said many things which he could not understand,
 and many others which he could understand, but could not believe,
 when asked his opinion of the address, replied—"Made up of the best
 of words—Master—the best of words."

